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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3855
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RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC
RUEHMC/AMCONSUL MONTERREY 9450

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTERREY 000289

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: MONTERREY'S GROWING PROSTITUTION PROBLEM

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11. (SBU) Summary: A researcher at the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon states that there is a growing prostitution industry in Monterrey, which has transformed the city into a major sex tourism destination in Mexico. Traffickers lure women by promising legitimate employment and then violently coerce them into prostitution, cycling them between Mexican and U.S. cities. Around the time they are 25, the sex workers are forced out, often infected with HIV/AIDS, and become social outcasts. End summary.

12. (SBU) On July 22, Arun Kumar Acharya, a professor at the Institute of Social Investigation, Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, told PolOffs that Mexico's declining economy had fueled a growing sex tourism industry in Monterrey and other Mexican cities. According to him, traffickers lure impoverished women to the city with promises of high salaries and respectable employment, but then use harsh mental and physical coercion to force them into prostitution. Most prostitutes that he interviewed in the city originated from southern Mexican states.

Monterrey Becomes Sex Tourism Destination

13. (SBU) Monterrey gained international recognition as a result of the 2007 World Cultural Forum, Kumar explained, and the industry has gained momentum since then. He noted that the city has now joined Tijuana, Mexico City, Acapulco, Cancun, and Ciudad Juarez as a primary sex tourism destination.

14. (SBU) According to Kumar's research, Monterrey is both a destination and transit point for sex workers. Prostitutes are cycled throughout Mexican and U.S. cities. Most of the prostitutes entering from northern Mexico don't use visas to enter the U.S., but are smuggled across the border, he found. Interestingly, he said some female students from the elite Monterrey Institute of Technology told him they occasionally perform sex for money in U.S. cities.

Workers Start Young, Finish Young

15. (SBU) Kumar said traffickers often enlist women as young as nine. Around age 25, the prostitutes are considered too old and are eventually forced out of the business by the traffickers. By that time, they are usually infected with a sexually transmitted disease, commonly HIV/AIDS, and are outcasts in Mexico's conservative society due to their previous vocation.

16. (SBU) Younger sex workers can earn up to around US\$ 38 per act. Older prostitutes, seen as less desirable, charge as low as US\$ 11. In order to increase revenues, traffickers often force prostitutes to engage in high risk behavior, such as unprotected sex, or submit to violent acts, for which they charge a premium.

Societal Fix Needed

17. (SBU) Kumar opined that new legislation is not the answer to the problem. Indeed, Mexico already has anti-prostitution legislation and is a signatory to international human rights conventions. Instead, Kumar said that the problem could only be resolved by strengthening social institutions to provide better economic and educational opportunities along with improved health care to impoverished communities.

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Comment

18. (SBU) Kumar, a native of Orissa, India who has been in Mexico since 2002, painted an increasingly dire picture of sex trafficking in Monterrey and northern Mexico. His articles on the sex trade have appeared in numerous publications, including a recently released book "A New Form of Human Slavery - The Trafficking of Women in Mexico," that he authored. Kumar noted that he is seeking funding for additional sex trade study of the border area.

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